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TOP ISLAMIC STATE LEADER KILLED IN JOINT RAID BY U.S., NIGERIA FORCES

US and Nigerian forces killed Abu Bakr al-Minuki in a covert operation launched late on Friday night in northeastern Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin

TRUMP CALLS HIM GROUP'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND

US President Donald Trump said a "meticulously planned and very complex mission" eliminated the world's most active terrorist. Al-Mainuki was seen as a key figure in IS organisation and finance, and had been plotting attacks against the US, an official said. Trump called him the group's second-in-command globally, a claim many analysts are sceptical about | P14

SPOTLIGHTS GROWING US-NIGERIA PARTNERSHIP

- The Nigerian military said the latest operation was the culmination of months of intelligence gathering and reconnaissance
- It puts spotlight on the US-Nigeria security partnership launched last year amid complaints from the Trump administration that the Nigerian government is not doing enough to combat terrorist groups

2023
WHEN THE U.S. IMPOSED SANCTIONS ON AL-MINUKI

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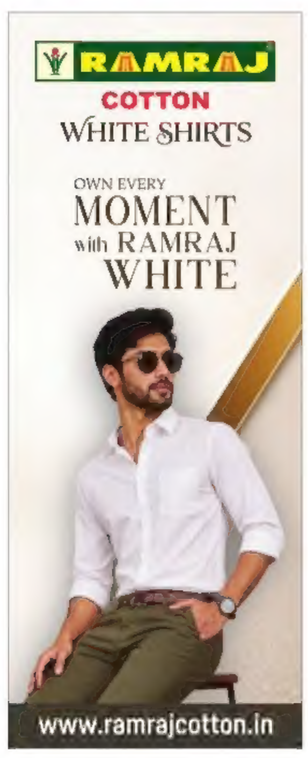

300-YR WAIT FOR CHOLA PLATES ENDS

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

THE Netherlands on Friday formally returned the 11th-century Anaimangalam Chola Copper Plates to India, marking the culmination of a 14-year diplomatic effort to reclaim one of the most important surviving records of the Chola Empire and a prized symbol of Tamil heritage held overseas.

The handover took place in The Hague in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten.

Known in Europe for centuries as the Leiden Plates, the artefacts date to the reign of Emperor Rajaraja Chola I, the builder of the Brihadeeswara Temple at Thanjavur and among the most powerful rulers in South Asian history.

Anaimangalam Chola Copper Plate. The 21 copper plates carry the imprint of two generations of Chola power | x

The 21 copper plates, weighing nearly 30 kg and bound together by a bronze ring bearing the royal Chola seal, are more than royal records. They preserve the memory of a maritime empire deeply connected to trade, diplomacy and religion across the Indian Ocean.

One section of the plates, inscribed in Sanskrit, traces the genealogy and divine lineage of the Chola dynasty. The Tamil section records a striking act of medieval religious pluralism and international engagement, Rajaraja Chola I granting revenues from villages near Anaimangalam to support a Buddhist vihara in Nagapattinam built by the Srivijaya kingdom of Southeast Asia.

The inscription offers a rare glimpse into a cosmopolitan world where commerce, faith and political alliances travelled together along monsoon sea routes. A Shaivite emperor patronising a Buddhist institution established by a foreign ruler reflects the Chola Empire's maritime reach and cultural confidence.

In Netherlands since 1700

Historians believe the plates reached the Netherlands around 1700 through Florentius Camper, linked to a Christian mission during the period of Dutch control over Nagapattinam. By then, the Dutch East India Company had made the city its headquarters on Coromandel Coast

Karnataka gets 1,122 extra medical seats

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA has received 1,122 additional medical seats for undergraduate and postgraduate courses, in what the state government described as a major achievement in the field of medical education.

Addressing the media at Vikasa Soudha on Saturday, Medical Education Minister Sharanprakash R Patil said the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare granted the final approval for the seats on May 15. He added that the Centre will provide Rs 495 crore for undergraduate medical seats and Rs 541 crore for postgraduate seats, taking the total financial assistance to Rs 1,090 crore.

He said the allocation of more than 1,000 seats to a single state is a record.

He said the additional seats would benefit districts including Koppal, Gadag, Chamarajanagar, Karwar and Haveri, helping improve access to medical education and healthcare infrastructure across the state.

3rd language must for Class IX: CBSE

To kick in from July 1, score won't be a bar for X Boards

IFRAH MUFTI @ New Delhi

THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Saturday announced that the study of three languages will become compulsory for students from Class IX beginning July 1, 2026, in accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023.

In a circular issued on Friday, the Board clarified that students must study three languages — referred to as R1, R2 and R3 — with at least two of them being native Indian languages. However, to reduce academic pressure, the CBSE stated that there will be no Board examination for the third language at the Class X level.

The Board said all assessments for the third language (R3) would be conducted internally by schools. Students' performance in the subject will still be recorded and reflected in the CBSE certificate, but no student will be prevented from appearing in the Class X Board examinations because of R3.

According to the circular, schools can choose any language from the CBSE-approved list of subjects, provided that at least two of them are Indian languages. Foreign languages may only be taken as the third language if the first two are Indian languages, or they may be opted for as an additional fourth language.

As part of the transition process, CBSE said students entering Class IX in 2026 would initially study from Class VI-level textbooks for the third language until specialised secondary-level textbooks are developed and introduced. Schools have also been encouraged to enrich classroom teaching with local and regional literary material to promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

The implementation of the three-language formula has raised concerns among some schools regarding teacher availability and infrastructure. Addressing these challenges, the CBSE advised schools facing shortages of qualified language teachers to adopt temporary measures such as sharing teaching resources with nearby schools, using virtual learning support, or hiring retired teachers and qualified postgraduate educators.

The Board also announced that relaxations would be provided for children with special needs, schools located outside India, and foreign students returning to the country. These exemptions and accommodations, the CBSE said, would be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure smooth implementation of the new policy.

All assessments for R3 (third language) shall be entirely school-based and internal. The performance of students in R3 will be duly reflected in the CBSE certificate

CBSE circular

Class VI textbooks for now

Students entering Class IX would initially study from Class VI-level textbooks for the third language until specialised secondary-level textbooks are introduced. Schools facing shortages of teachers can adopt temporary measures like sharing teaching resources with nearby schools

Acute staff shortage cripples KSPCB

Even if new staff members are hired, they will require at least six months of training

PC Rai, former KSPCB official

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

AN acute shortage of staff has rendered the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) helpless, affecting its functioning in addressing pollution-related issues across the state.

The board has not been monitoring air and water pollution regularly and has found itself unable to comply with court orders within stipulated timelines. Inspections of sewage and effluent treatment plants, waste dumping sites and monitoring of water quality in lakes, valleys and rivers have nearly come to a standstill.

KSPCB Chairman PM Narendra Swamy said that against the sanctioned strength of over 700 employees, the board has only around 200 staffers working across the state. "Only a third of the sanctioned staff strength is in place. The shortage of technical and field staff has led to piling up of work in offices and laboratories," he added.

KSPCB had requested the state government to recruit the staff immediately, but there was no positive response. The board has now made a special request to the central government to address the staff crunch. CONTINUED ON: P6

First-ever haul of 'jihadi drug' in India, 1 held

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Narcotics Control Bureau has busted an international drug syndicate involved in the trafficking of Captagon and seized approximately 227.7 kg of the 'jihadi drug' worth ₹182 crore, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Saturday.

This is the country's first-ever seizure of the drug, a highly addictive synthetic stimulant often referred to as 'Jihadi drug', since it is widely popular among them.

One foreign national linked to the trafficking network was also arrested. Calling the seizure a landmark success in India's anti-drug campaign, Union home minister Amit Shah reiterated the government's commitment to a Drug-Free India and praised the agency for dismantling the network.

Sharing details of the operation, officials said NCB received a tip from a foreign drug law enforcement agency and raided a house in Neb Sarai, New Delhi. They recovered 31.5 kg of Captagon tablets on May 11. The drug was meant to be sent to Jeddah. The house was rented by a Syrian national.

All about Captagon

Captagon is the street name of Fenethylline, a synthetic stimulant originally developed during the 1960s for treatment of attention disorders and narcolepsy. Because of its highly addictive nature and widespread abuse potential, it was banned. Today, most Captagon tablets are produced clandestinely using methamphetamine, caffeine and other synthetic stimulants

Elite Special Protection Group faces DIG crunch

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

FOLLOWING a similar crisis at the Intelligence Bureau, the country's Special Protection Group (SPG), responsible for the Prime Minister's security, is now grappling with a shortage of Deputy Inspector General (DIG)-rank IPS officers. This comes on the back of several senior IPS personnel being repatriated to their parent cadres.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has written to Chief Secretaries of all states except Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territories requesting them to identify and recommend eligible IPS officers for central deputation to the SPG.

States have been asked to widely circulate vacancy details among eligible officers and submit a list of willing candidates within 30 days, along with detailed service records, vigilance clearance, and the consent of nominated officers.

To qualify for DIG-rank positions in the SPG, officers must have completed a minimum of 14 years of IPS service. The stringent screening reflects the sensitivity of the role: DIG-rank officers in the SPG are responsible for strategic supervision, operational coordination, threat assessment, intelligence liaison, and oversight of security arrangements linked to the Prime Minister's domestic and international movements.

The shortage has become particularly significant after nearly a dozen DIG-rank officers were repatriated to their cadre states in recent months, creating gaps in the SPG's leadership structure. The impact is critical because of the SPG's specialised operational role.

No end to IB's dearth of officers

As reported by this paper on April 27, the Intelligence Bureau has also been grappling with a dearth of IPS officers at the DIG-level. Of the 203 IPS posts in the Intelligence Bureau, 81 remain unfilled, indicating an overall shortfall of around 40 per cent. The DIG rank alone accounts for 36 vacancies against 63 posts

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